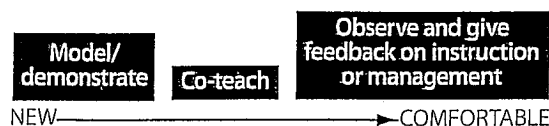


# Classroom supporter

PURPOSE:  
TO INCREASE THE QUALITY  
AND EFFECTIVENESS  
OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION.

**C**oaches spend a great deal of their time working directly with teachers in their classrooms. In the role of classroom supporter, coaches choose from a continuum of possible support options. (See diagram at right.)

This range of options begins with coaches taking a dominant role in the classroom by demonstrating an instructional practice or how to teach a specific concept. Then, the coach shares the work with the teacher as a co-teacher. In the final stage, the teacher assumes full responsibility and receives feedback from the coach.



This continuum is built on the theory of gradual release. Over time, the teacher assumes more responsibility for owning or enacting the new behaviors. When an instructional strategy or content is new to the teacher, the coach may choose to model. As the teacher becomes more comfortable with the strategy or content, the coach moves towards the right along the continuum.

When a coach models or demonstrates, she does so in a classroom of students similar to the teacher's or in the teacher's classroom with his students. The coach co-plans a lesson, often in collaboration with the teacher, and conducts the lesson with the teacher or a group of teachers observing.

**Tool 6.1** provides a protocol for planning a demonstration lesson. Sometimes, coaches teach part-time in a demonstration classroom in which they model instructional practices for visitors who may observe within the classroom or "behind the glass." Coaches choose modeling when:

- A teaching practice is new;
- Teachers feel uncertain about how to implement a new practice;
- Teachers have some disbelief or concern about how the practice will work with their students; or
- Teachers might benefit from a model or exemplar of the practice.

The coach's demonstration of an instructional strategy or teaching of a particular concept requires the classroom teacher to take an active role in observing the lesson and to focus the observation on those behaviors of the coach and students that are most relevant to the demonstration lesson.

**Tool 6.2** offers one template to guide the notes the teacher may want to take while the coach is demonstrating a lesson. Whether observing in his or her own classroom, a demonstration classroom, or another teacher's classroom, the teacher will want to plan in advance with the coach for the specific kind of data to collect about the lesson. Together, the coach and teacher can adapt this observation guide or construct a new one for teachers to use during the demonstration. The observation guide can be helpful when the coach and teacher meet after the demonstration to discuss the teacher's observations, to answer the teacher's questions, and to facilitate the teacher's learning and application of this learning into his or her own classroom practice.

Coaches may choose co-teaching as an option

#### **Effective co-teachers:**

- Are tolerant, reflective, and flexible.
- Accept responsibility for all students in the class.
- Maintain positive relationships with each other.
- Share their beliefs and expectations with each other.
- Maintain open communication.

#### **Successful co-teaching depends on:**

- Making agreements with one another about some basics: model of co-teaching, planning, intervening, time, interruptions, dealing with mistakes, etc.
- Practice.
- Clarity about the purpose and what is being practiced.

for classroom support. Co-teaching is the practice of sharing responsibility equally with the teacher.

Teacher and coach collaborate in planning the lesson using the prescribed curriculum and the school's accepted lesson-planning template. The co-taught lesson always follows the natural course of the curriculum rather than deviating from it to accommodate the co-teaching. Coach and teacher determine in advance the role each will play in the lesson. Sometimes, the division of responsibility falls along various aspects of the lesson design. For example, the teacher may review the previous lesson and present the lesson's objective and introduce the co-teacher. The co-teacher (coach) may then activate students' background knowledge.

**Tool 6.3** offers guidance in designing agreements about co-teaching.

Coaches choose co-teaching when the teacher has a beginning level of understanding and comfort with the new practice and when the teacher is ready to try the practice. Occasionally, coaches will

## MODELS OF CO-TEACHING

### MODEL A: **Large group/small group.** One

person teaches the large group; the other teaches a small group or individuals in turn.

### MODEL B: **Parallel and simultaneous teaching.**

Both teachers teach the same content to separate groups of students.

### MODEL C: **Differentiated, simultaneous**

**teaching.** Both teachers teach the same content differentiated for their group of students.

### MODEL D: **Leveled groups.** Both teachers teach

different content to students grouped for instruction.

### MODEL E: **Teaching together.** Both teachers

teach a whole class lesson and both monitor student work.

### MODEL E1: **Tag-team (turn teaching).**

Teachers take turns teaching so that one is on and one is off. The off teacher monitors student work.

### MODEL E2: **Speak and chart.** One teacher

presents information while the other charts or records key points and/or student responses in a visible format to aid student learning.

### MODEL E3: **Duet teaching.** Both teachers

teach the same lesson to the same group of students simultaneously. They alternate brief ideas, give examples of what the other has said, even complete each other's sentences. (*HINT: This requires a significant degree of trust and skillfulness, not to mention planning.*)

Source: Adapted from Garmston, 2005, and Zigmond & Magiera, 2001.

encounter teachers who are so comfortable having the coach model a lesson that they resist co-teaching. Gentle urging is one strategy to encourage teachers to take the risk to co-teach with the coach.

A third option for the coach as classroom supporter is observing and offering feedback through reflection conferences (Costa & Garmston, 2002). Before the coach and teacher agree to this option, they might find it helpful to determine the coach's feedback orientation. The coach may choose to observe and offer feedback from the orientation of an expert, someone who has considerable knowledge and skill in a particular area and who will offer feedback from the stance of an expert to help the teacher improve his or her practice. When the coach operates from the stance of an expert, the teacher clearly designates himself or herself as the student or novice. Another stance the coach may choose is one of promoting the teacher's reflective analysis of his or her practice. In this stance, the coach asks questions to stimulate the teacher's self-analysis of the lesson rather than offering expert feedback. When the coach's orientation is to promote reflective analysis, the teacher accepts responsibility to examine critically his or her own practice. These two orientations are ends of a continuum along which the coach and teacher may move fluidly during a debriefing session or establish a set orientation for the particular debriefing sessions.

Usually, although not always, the coach meets with the teacher before observing the lesson to determine the area of focus for the observation, get an overview of the lesson and needed information about the students, and to arrange logistics for the observation. Together, the coach and teacher identify the type of data the coach will collect and how the coach will present the data after the lesson. The areas of focus include teacher verbal and non-verbal behaviors and student verbal and non-verbal behaviors (Costa & Garmston, 2002).

The coach may use an observation guide similar to the one that the teacher used to watch the

## SNAPSHOT OF A COACH AS A CLASSROOM SUPPORTER

**B**ill Jackson\*, a differentiation coach, serves two elementary schools and a middle school. He spends one day a week at each elementary school and two days at the middle school. When he is on-site at his three schools, he divides his time working with teams of teachers planning and demonstrating, co-teaching, and observing individual teachers. Weekly, he concentrates on one grade-level team at the elementary and several interdisciplinary teams at the middle school. The week before he is scheduled for work with a grade or team, Jackson meets with teachers to plan how he can best support them during his visit.

A look at part of one day in Jackson's schedule

provides an example of how he serves as a classroom supporter. (See below.)

In a typical morning, Jackson holds three meetings with teachers, models a differentiation strategy, and co-teaches another. He moves quickly and fluidly among the various aspects of this role, prepared for each one. In this role, coaches are often drawing on the role of curriculum and instructional specialists to assist with lesson planning and on the role of data coach to assess student learning and consider next steps. Working almost exclusively in the role of classroom supporter, a coach's day can be quite full.

*\* Fictitious name and school*

## TUESDAY, JANSEN ELEMENTARY

Time	Action
7:45	Meet with the 4th-grade team to plan work with the team next Tuesday.
8:30	Model tiering, the newest differentiation strategy, in Ellie Repp's classroom. Frances Chevalier, another 2nd-grade teacher, slips in to observe the demonstration lesson.
9:10	Debrief with Repp and Chevalier in Repp's classroom while her students are engaged in seat work.
9:30	Observe Phil Cook using learning centers. By prior agreement, observe how three students respond to the strategy.
10:00	Review notes for meeting with Phil Cook.
10:30	The principal slips into Cook's class so Cook and Jackson can meet in the conference room. Jackson uses the descriptive protocol to share data from the lesson. Together, they discuss the implications of the data and plan for Cook's next steps.
11:00	Co-teach with Barbara Black.
11:30	Eat lunch with the 2nd-grade team. The four teachers share what they have learned during the morning and how they can use the new differentiation strategies.

demonstration lesson. When a coach uses an observation guide, we recommend sharing it in advance with the teacher.

**Tool 6.4** is a preobservation map that a coach may use as he or she meets with the teacher to discuss the lesson that will be observed. The coach

watches the teacher conduct a lesson, gathers data on a mutually agreed-upon focus area, records those data on an observation guide. The coach reviews the notes he or she took to identify patterns and trends and specific points to discuss in the debriefing session. As soon as possible after the lesson, the coach meets with the teacher to debrief the observation. The coach uses one of a number of feedback protocols to assist the teacher in reflecting on his or her lesson.

**Tool 6.5** is a Reflective Feedback Protocol that can be used following the lesson.

A coach chooses observing and giving feedback when teachers have implemented the new practices within their own classrooms independently and are ready to receive feedback on their practice. This form of classroom support helps teachers hone their instructional skills and strengthen their practice. It also supports a teacher in becoming a reflective practitioner who regularly examines his or her own practice.

### Knowledge and skills

The knowledge and skills a coach uses as a classroom supporter are extensive.

When demonstrating, coaches must have a deep understanding of the curriculum and instructional strategies and use the skills of master teachers.

When co-teaching, coaches use their knowledge of curriculum, assessment, and instruction along with the specific skills of honoring the partner teacher, making agreements, and sharing responsibility for preparing the lesson.

When acting as an observer and feedback provider, the coach must know the elements of effective instruction.

Coaches must also be skilled at knowing what type of data can be collected and how to collect and analyze data from a classroom observation and to structure a productive feedback session focused on the area the teacher requested and structured in alignment with the feedback orientation the coach

### Additional resources

- *Cognitive Coaching: Weaving Threads of Learning and Change Into the Culture of an Organization*, by Jane Ellison and Carolee Hayes. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon, 2003.
- *Collaborative Peer Coaching That Improves Instruction: The 2+2 Performance Appraisal Model*, by Dwight W. Allen and Alyce C. LeBlanc. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2004.
- *Differentiated Coaching: A Framework for Helping Teachers Change*, by Jane Kise. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2006.
- *Quality Teaching in a Culture of Coaching*, by Stephen G. Barkley. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education, 2005.

and teacher agreed upon in their preconference.

In addition, the coach uses skills in observation, data collection, analysis, giving feedback, promoting metacognition and reflection in, on, and for practice, and building trusting relationships.

Most importantly, coaches in this role must know how to structure a system of gradual release so teachers move from dependence to independence with new strategies and content knowledge.

All dimensions of this role rest on the coach's ability to build trusting relationships, demonstrate respect for the teacher, listen fully, and communicate clearly and concisely.

### Challenges

The greatest challenge a coach faces in this role is getting stuck on the demonstration end of the classroom supporter continuum. While demonstrations are an easy way to show teachers what instruction and learning might look like, teachers can become too comfortable with this because they

have less responsibility and accountability for student learning as an observer of a demonstration lesson. Coaches also find it easier sometimes to demonstrate rather than co-teach because that means they fully control the success of the lesson.

A danger in co-teaching is overstepping the agreed-upon boundaries to take over for the teacher if the lesson is not going well. When observing and giving feedback, a coach has several challenges. One is being clear on the feedback orientation the teacher wants and balancing that with the coach's role expectations. In addition, once an orientation is agreed to, a coach will not want to step over that agreement without the overt permission of the teacher. Coaches sometimes faces the challenge of balancing warm (positive) and cool (constructive) feedback in an artful way that helps the teacher clearly know the areas for improvement, while not overwhelming the

teacher with too much information. A tremendous challenge for coaches is knowing when and how to move the teacher along the continuum to increase the teacher's responsibility and accountability for student learning while ensuring that the teacher is both comfortable and confident.

#### References

Costa, A. & Garmston, R. (2002). *Cognitive coaching: A foundation for renaissance schools, 2nd ed.* Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

Garmston, R. (2005). *The presenter's fieldbook: A practical guide, 2nd ed.* Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

Zigmond, N. & Magiera, K. (2001). A focus on co-teaching. *Current Practice Alerts*, (6), 1-4. [www.teachingld.org/pdf/Alert6.pdf](http://www.teachingld.org/pdf/Alert6.pdf)